



## MEMORANDUM

April 18, 2012

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Cindy Kebba, Planner III

VIA: David Levy, Chief of Long Range Planning

SUBJECT: *Rockville's Pike: Envision a Great Place* – Work Session #22  
Outstanding transportation issues: Jefferson Street and Fleet Street extensions  
Incentives for additional building height

At the April 11, 2012 Rockville Pike work session, the Planning Commission requested that staff return to the next work session with three items for discussion. These items include: A) information that the Commission had requested previously on the proposed Fleet Street extension, B) feedback that the Commission had previously requested for bicycle accommodations for the Jefferson Street extension, and C) recommendations for requirements that would need to be met to be allowed additional building height throughout the plan area.

### **A. Fleet Street Follow-Up**

The Planning Commission posed several questions about the proposed Fleet Street extension (from Mt. Vernon Place to Richie Parkway) during the discussion of this topic at the February 8, 2012 work session. These questions are listed below and followed by staff's responses, which are based on additional research.

1. Where are the water and sewer lines located in the right-of-way (ROW) for the proposed extension?

This question was raised in conjunction with the desire to buffer the houses on the west side of the Fleet Street extension ROW with trees. Attachment 1 shows the locations of the existing water and sewer lines within the Fleet Street extension right-of-way. The sewer line (shown in red) was recently replaced and relocated so that it would most likely be inside the curb and beneath the pavement if the road is built. The water line (shown in blue) is approximately 50 years old. Each line is located within a 20-foot easement. The water and sewer lines must be located at least 10 feet from each other; currently they are approximately 25 feet apart.

Vegetation was recently removed from the ROW because the roots had penetrated the sewer line and to protect the existing water line from similar damage. The locations of these lines have an impact on where trees can be planted in the future. Evergreen or shade trees could be planted on the western side of the ROW if the water line was replaced and moved further east. If a road was constructed and the sewer was under the pavement, this would likely allow room for trees to be planted between the sewer and water lines since the pavement would restrict the

tree roots from growing toward the sewer line. Only ornamental trees with a smaller root system could be planted between the water and sewer lines now because there is no road to protect the sewer line from roots of larger trees, and even this would probably not be advisable.

Any decision to plant trees as a buffer for the residences on the west side of the proposed extension, and the species of trees that could be planted, would be made at the engineering and design stage for the road. A feasibility study would need to be done to assess the issues involved with moving the water line.

2. What are recommended options for sound and visual barriers to protect existing residential uses on the west side?

Trees may be a viable option for a west side buffer if the water line is moved further east and/or if the sewer line is located beneath the paved road within the curb, but there are other options as well. For instance, a berm could be included on the west side within the existing water line easement which would help to reduce noise and provide some visual buffer for houses that back up to the extension. Berms do not have the same impact on water and sewer lines as trees do.

It not anticipated that the Fleet Street extension would be a high volume or high speed road and the need for such mitigation is not expected to be acute, relative to many other residential areas in Rockville that abut heavily used or high-speed roads. However, ensuring adequate screening for the Hungerford neighborhood houses that front E. Jefferson Street and back up to the extension would be an important consideration of the road design. In addition, most of those houses have trees or fences in their backyards already and homeowners are able to supplement buffers on their own property if they choose to do so.

3. Would adding curves slow travel speeds?

The recommended speed limit on the Fleet Street extension is slow (e.g., 25 miles per hour). The distance from Richie Parkway to Mt. Vernon Place is approximately 740 feet. It is anticipated that there would be four-way stop signs at both of these intersections at Fleet Street. It is difficult to significantly increase vehicular speeds from a stopped position over a distance of only 740 feet. In addition, substantial curves are needed in order to have an impact of slowing vehicular speeds. The ROW is not long or wide enough to incorporate curves that would have a moderating impact on speed.

Staff is committed to implementing any traffic calming measures that would be appropriate to make the extension of Fleet Street safe, particularly for pedestrians in the area, and especially given the proximity of Richard Montgomery High School.

4. Are there reasonable options for moving the road further east ?

Mr. Kai Hu proposed, through written testimony #113, to locate the Fleet Street extension in the middle of the Ritchie Shopping Plaza and the adjoining automobile dealership. Staff has examined this option and determined that if an extension of Fleet Street is desired, the existing ROW offers the best location. Moving the road to the middle of Richie Plaza and the adjacent dealership, where the City does not have ROW, would be more costly, the resulting road would be more circuitous, and it would have a significant impact on the existing commercial property between the ROW and the Pike. Future development on the site likely would be moved closer to the Hungerford residences under this scenario, whereas the current alignment allows the road to be a buffer for those houses from more dense development.

The Fleet Street extension is recommended in both the 2002 Comprehensive Master Plan and the 1989 Rockville Pike Plan.<sup>1</sup> If the Planning Commission chooses to reverse this recommendation in the revised Rockville Pike Plan, the ROW could be abandoned. Under an abandonment, half of the width of the ROW would likely be given to the

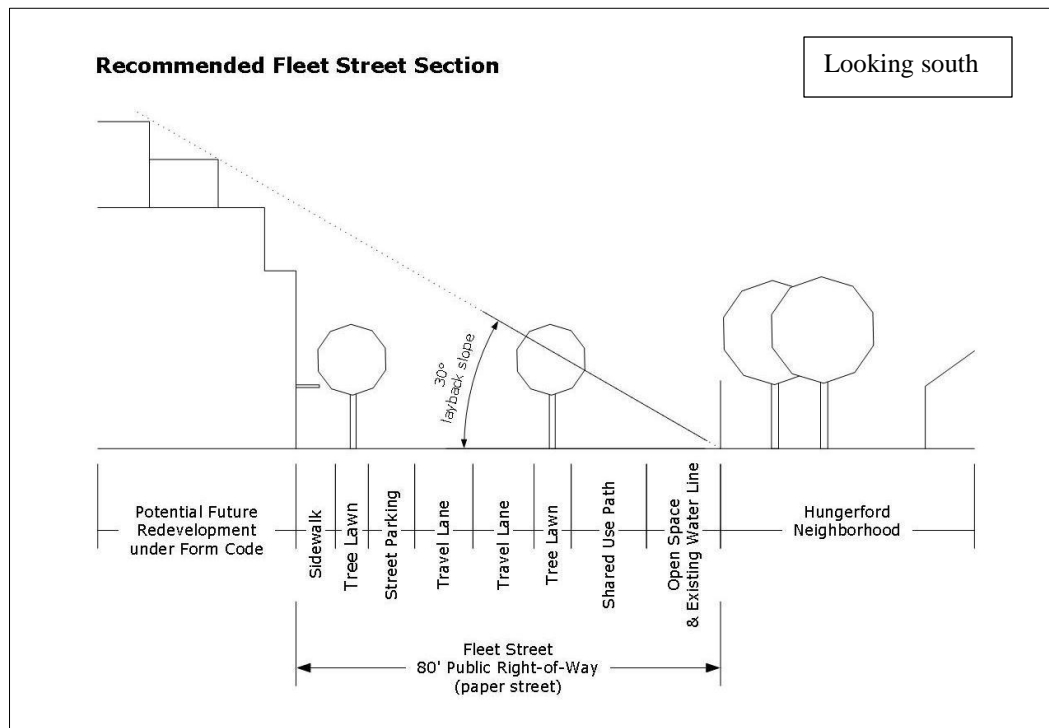
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<sup>1</sup> The 1989 Rockville Pike Plan envisioned Fleet Street as a 4-lane road. The current recommendation is for a two-lane road.

commercial property owners on the east side. This would also allow commercial development to move closer to the existing residences.

➤ Staff recommendation for straw vote

Staff recommends that the Fleet Street extension and its location in the existing ROW, as shown in the City's Comprehensive Master Plan (pages 4-37 and 4-39), be continued as a recommendation in the Rockville Pike Plan. Below is a diagram of a potential cross-section of the proposed extension, which takes into consideration the current locations of the water and sewer lines. This design would be subject to change, however, based on the variables discussed above.



5. What are recommended options for the east side frontage in terms of land uses and building heights?

➤ Staff recommendation for straw vote

Staff recommends that the frontage on the east side of the Fleet Street extension be North Pike Urban General with the following development standards:

- Building height minimum: 1 story
- Building height maximum: 5 stories, plus one as an incentive, but the 30 degree layback slope would limit building height to approximately 45 feet at the Fleet Street build-to line.
- Percentage of building façade required at build-to line: 30% minimum
- Minimum first floor ceiling height: 10 feet
- Maximum floor-to-floor height: 25 feet ground floor; 15 feet upper floors
- Minimum side and rear setbacks: 0 feet required; 10 feet or more if provided

➤ Staff recommendation for straw vote

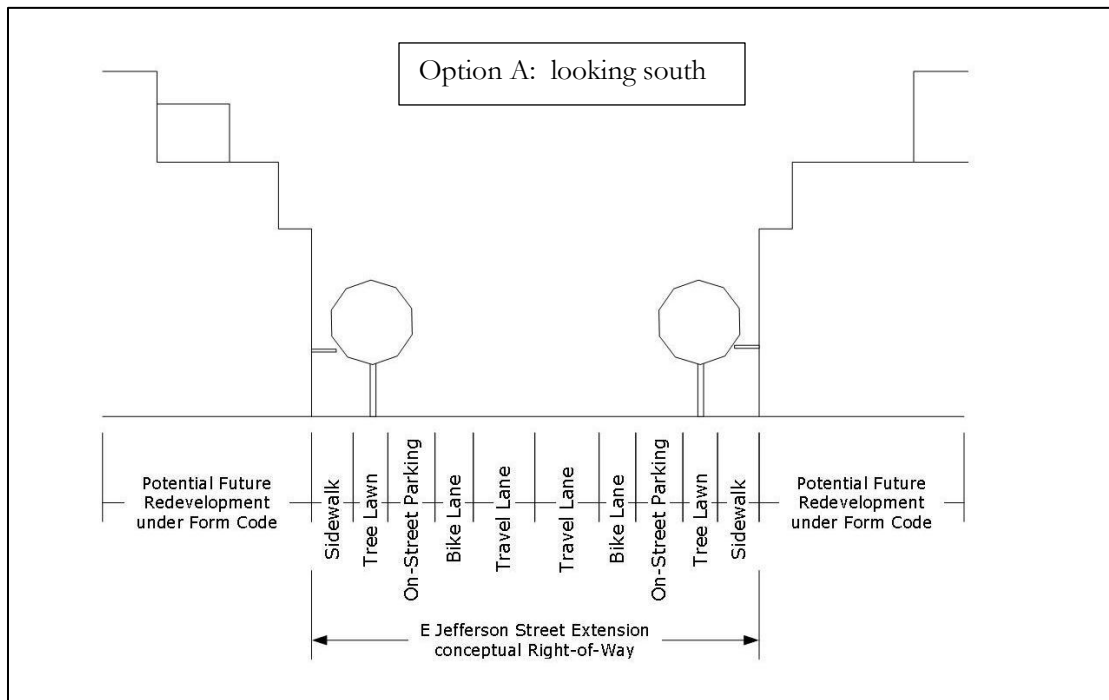
Staff also recommends that limited retail uses be allowed on the ground floor of this Urban General frontage to allow small, neighborhood-oriented shops and cafes to front Fleet Street, in addition to the residential and service uses that are allowed in this frontage. A cap could be placed on the square footage of individual retail spaces along the east side of the Fleet Street extension.

## B. Jefferson Street Follow-Up

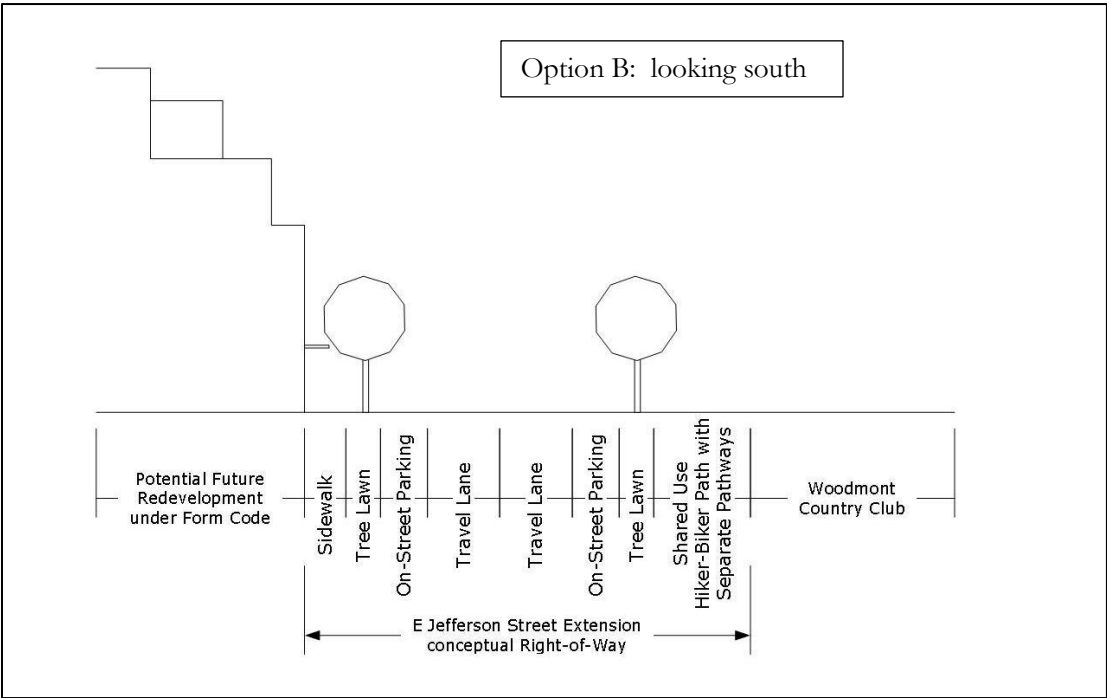
At the February 8, 2012 work session, the Planning Commission took a straw vote to include a recommendation in the Rockville Pike Plan to extend Jefferson Street from where it currently ends, north of Congressional Lane northward to Wootton Parkway. Although the extension would be illustrated conceptually in the plan, there would be flexibility as to the exact alignment and design, based on engineering studies and specific development proposals, and in order to protect existing and proposed adjacent residential development.

The roadway design approved by the Commission, by straw vote, includes two travel lanes (one in each direction), on-street parking, tree lawns, sidewalks and accommodations for bicycles. However, two options were presented to the Commission for bicycle accommodation.

Option “A” showed a bike lane in each direction between the travel lane and the on-street parking.



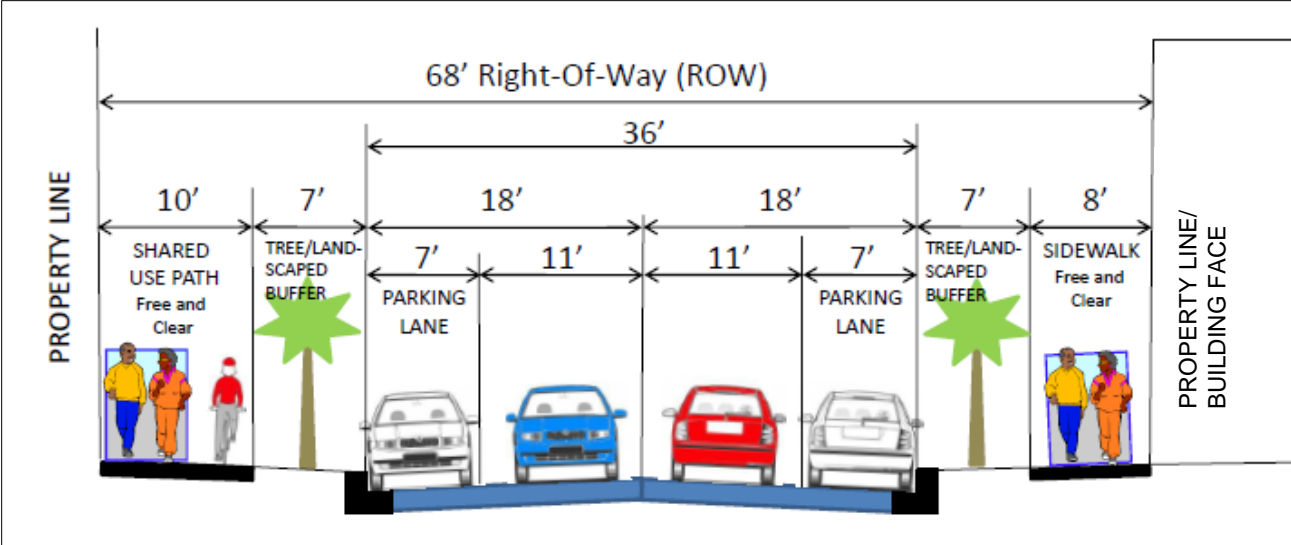
Option “B” showed a shared use hiker-biker path on the west side of the road and no bike lanes.



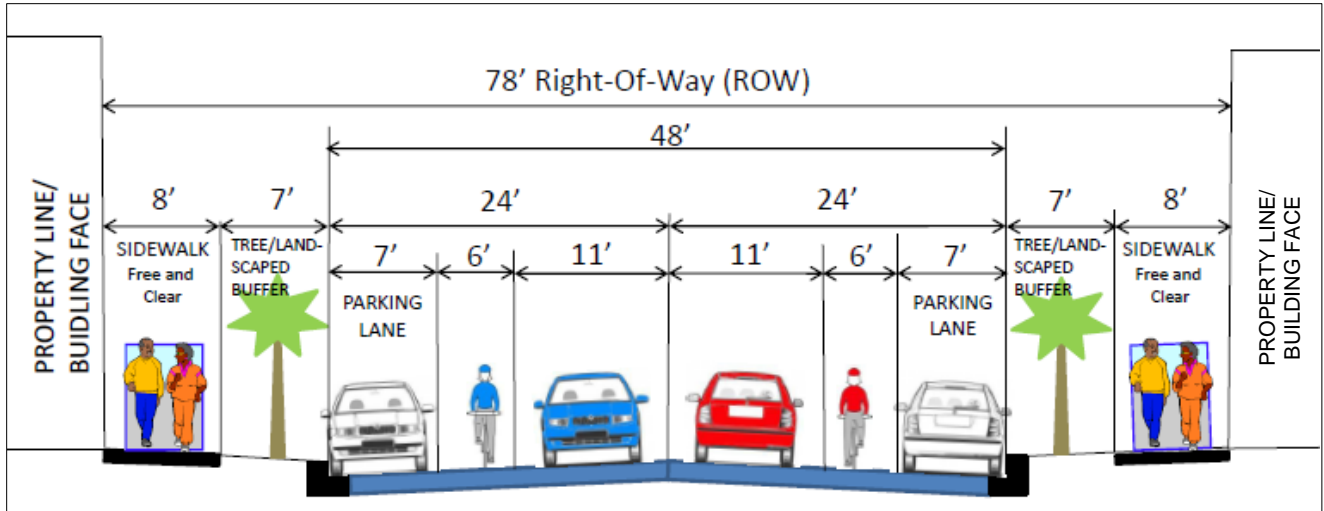
The Planning Commission directed staff to ask the Rockville Bicycle Advisory Committee (RBAC) for its recommendation regarding bicycle accommodations on the E. Jefferson Street extension. Staff did this and made the same request of the Traffic and Transportation Commission. (see Attachment 2).

In order to prepare for the meetings with these two groups, transportation and planning staff further expanded and revised the alternatives as shown:

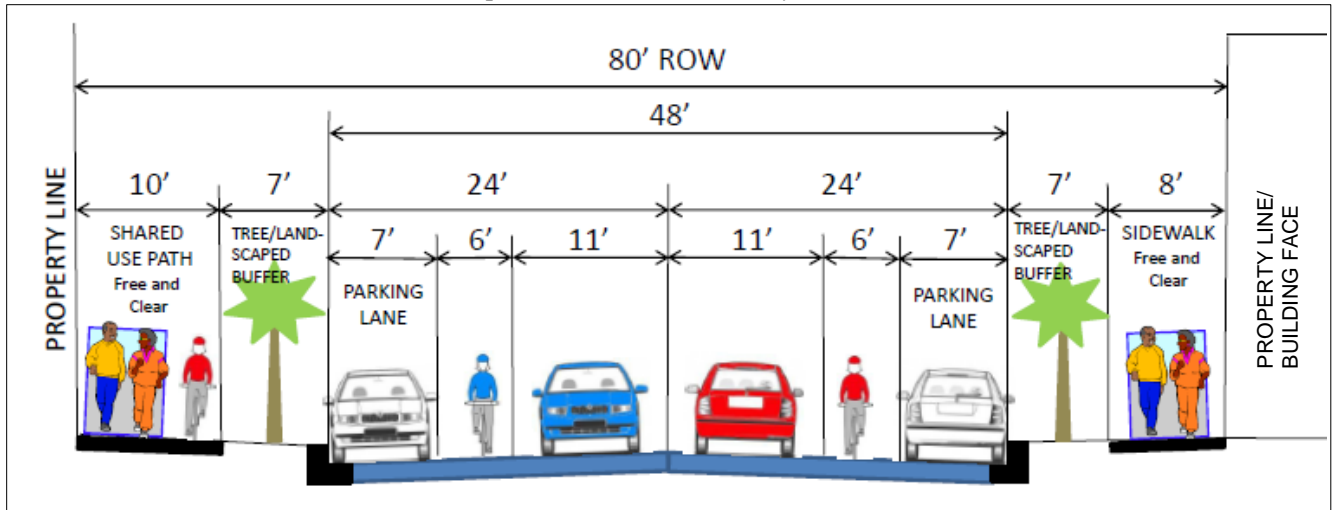
Alternative 1: 10-foot shared use path on west side



Alternative 2: 6-foot bicycle lanes in each direction



Alternative 3: Combination of shared use path on west side with bicycle lanes



City transportation and planning staff presented the options to RBAC on March 7, 2012 and to the Traffic and Transportation Commission on March 27, 2012 to solicit each group's input on the three proposed roadway sections with regard to bicycle accommodation. Alternatives 2 and 3 were preferred by RBAC and alternative 2 was preferred by the Traffic and Transportation Commission.

➤ Staff recommendation for straw vote

After evaluating the recommendations and other bicycle facilities proposed as part of the Rockville Pike Plan (particularly the two-directional bicycle paths shown in boulevard alternatives 2 and 9), staff recommends Jefferson Street Extension Alternative 2, shown above.

### C. Incentives for Additional Building Stories

Staff recommends that the Planning Commission consider the following provisions that could be required in order to receive approval to build one to two additional stories above the base maximum height allowed by street frontage. One, or a combination of these provisions, could be used to provide the incentive of added height. Staff has not determined the particular requirements but, at this time, requests that the Commission provide direction on

which, if any of these options, it would like to pursue. The Rockville Pike Plan would make the general recommendation; the particular requirements would be identified in full in the accompanying zoning documents.

Staff recommends that increasing the number of affordable housing units and increasing public open space be the broad goals for providing the incentives for additional stories. These goals could be achieved in the following ways:

#### Affordable housing

1. Provide a higher percentage of Moderately-Priced Dwelling Units than is already required by zoning.

Per Chapter 13.5 of the Rockville City Code entitled “Moderately Priced Housing”, new residential developments that contain 50 or more dwelling units must provide a certain percentage of the units as moderately priced dwelling units (MPDUs) that are available to households who earn between 80% and 120% of the county’s median household income and that have lowered rents that are affordable to this income range. The percentage of dwelling units that must be reserved as MPDUs varies between 12.5 and 15.0%, depending on zone and the amount by which the approved development exceeds the normal density for the zone. In Town Center and the Rockville Pike Corridor in the MXCD and MXTD zones, at least 15% of the total number of dwelling units must be MPDUs.

One or two additional stories could be allowed if the percentage of provided MPDUs exceeds 15% by a specified amount. The exact percentage of MPDU units that would need to be provided will need to be determined.

2. Provide housing units for individuals and families whose household incomes are below the range that qualifies for MPDUs.

Income ranges for MPDUs are determined by household size and currently range from \$44,600 for one person to \$68,800 for a five-person household. There appears to be a need for dwelling units for households whose incomes are below this range.

3. Provide affordable (to be defined) three-bedroom or larger units.

The vast majority of multifamily dwelling units that are built, including those offered as rental and for purchase MPDUs, are one- and two-bedroom units. There appears to be demand for larger units, affordable three-bedroom or larger units.

#### Public Open Space

Provide dedicated parks and/or other indoor or outdoor space that may include community or meeting rooms, and recreational facilities that are fully accessible and available to the general public beyond the 15% park dedication or fee-in-lieu requirement that the Planning Commission approved by straw vote at the March 28, 2012 work session on parks and open space.

#### Provide a crossing over the tracks

Any developer who could create a pedestrian and or vehicular crossing over the railroad and Metro tracks, particularly in the Middle or North Pike, as part of the redevelopment of property on the east side of the Pike could be offered additional building height.

The Rockville Pike Plan consultants did not recommend a connection across the tracks (draft plan p. 5.15). As an alternative, the draft plan recommended improving the quality of the walking experience along Lewis Avenue on the east side of the Metrorail right-of-way to facilitate walking from the Twinbrook neighborhood to Rockville Pike. Staff adds that there are no opportunities for creating a crossing in the foreseeable future.

A developer would likely need to purchase one or more lots on Lewis Avenue to provide a connection, which may not provide sufficient incentive for an additional building story especially on a narrow lot where the added square footage would be limited. However, this potential could be included in the plan to allow for the possibility.

- Straw vote: Does the Planning Commission wish to include any or all of the above incentives in the Rockville Pike Plan as conditions for obtaining additional building height (one or two stories, depending on street frontage)? Does the Commission have other incentives it wishes to include in the plan?

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